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FEANTSA RESPONSE TO THE EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS

Yesterday, the European Commission published a European Pillar of Social Rights, which sets out twenty key principles in the social area. FEANTSA warmly welcomes the fact that Priority 19 is “housing and assistance for the homeless”, stating:

- a. Access to social housing or housing assistance of good quality shall be provided for those in need.
- b. Vulnerable people have the right to appropriate assistance and protection against forced eviction.
- c. Adequate shelter and services shall be provided to the homeless in order to promote their social inclusion.

This brings together various aspects of the right to housing in a new way at EU level. It establishes that everyone in the EU should have a decent home, with social housing or housing assistance provided to those who need it. People should be protected from eviction and no one should ever be left without shelter.

In addition to Priority 19, several other priorities of the Pillar are highly relevant to homelessness and housing exclusion, e.g. equal treatment, access to essential services, inclusion of people with disabilities, support to children, social protection, minimum income, unemployment benefits etc.

The Commission emphasised yesterday that making the Pillar a reality for citizens is a joint responsibility, with much competence lying with Member States. It also underlined its own role in framework-setting and direction-giving. FEANTSA is hopeful that Priority 19 can become an actionable framework for real progress. We are campaigning for the EU to be fair, and stand up for homeless people. We will be working in the next weeks and months to ensure that the Pillar delivers more than the proclamation of housing rights. We will work with the Commission, national governments, regions, cities and other stakeholders to turn Priority 19 into more political ambition and concrete measures to put an end to homelessness and secure the right to housing for all.

One of the key questions going forward will be about how to measure progress on the priorities. The social scoreboard presented yesterday by the Commission will be a critical tool. In its current form, it may struggle to capture evolutions in extreme forms of poverty such as homelessness. It only includes one indicator on housing - severe housing deprivation, making it difficult to imagine that it can provide a sufficient basis for evaluating progress on Priority

19. FEANTSA will be discussing with the Commission and other stakeholders on how to plug this gap, including the use of the Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe that we publish each year.

Another key question is the extent to which the commitment to use the Pillar as a basis to set future priorities in the European Commission's annual Work Programme and in the future allocation of EU funding, as set out in the communication, will be undertaken by the European Commission. FEANTSA has often reiterated that the tools to tackle homelessness already exist at the European level, and this potential increase in political and financial support from the European Commission would mark a huge sea-change in the fight against homelessness.

Freek Spinnewijn, FEANTSA Director, said "with the European Pillar of Social Rights the Commission has set the bar high on tackling homelessness and housing exclusion. This comes at a time when the housing situation in much of Europe is worsening. It's crucial now to meet the expectations of citizens and turn Principle 19 into a framework to ensure everyone in Europe has a decent place to live."

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Notes for editors:

1. **FEANTSA** is the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless. It is an umbrella of not-for-profit organisations which participate in or contribute to the fight against homelessness in Europe. It is the only major European network focusing exclusively on homelessness at European level